

# Does It Stack? (Part Two)

*By Skip Williams*

Let's get started with the Armor Class of the example character now!

## Armor Class

Our example character has a wealth of Armor Class improvements:

- +7 armor bonus (+2 *chainmail*)
- +2 shield bonus (heavy shield)
- +1 deflection bonus (*ring of protection* +1)
- +2 natural armor (*barkskin* spell)
- +2 Dexterity bonus (the character's Dexterity is 17, thanks to the *cat's grace* spell, but chainmail allows only a +2 Dexterity bonus to Armor Class, says Table 7-6 in the *Player's Handbook*).
- +4 armor bonus (*mage armor* spell)
- +4 shield bonus (*shield* spell)
- +2 deflection bonus (*shield of faith* spell)

That's a lot of bonuses, but all the bonuses with the same names overlap, so we're left with the following: +7 armor bonus (+2 *chainmail*)

- +2 natural armor (*barkskin* spell)
- +2 bonus from Dexterity (from the *cat's grace* spell, as limited by the chainmail)
- +4 shield bonus (*shield* spell)
- +2 deflection bonus (*shield of faith* spell)

That's a total bonus of +17 to Armor Class, giving our example human (who has a base Armor Class of 10 with no size adjustment) an Armor Class of 27.

Please note a couple of things here:

**Multiple Enhancement Bonuses:** The character is effectively getting two enhancement bonuses to Armor Class (from the +2 *chainmail* and the *barkskin* spell), and that works in this case because those two bonuses are being applied to two different elements of the character's Armor Class.

**Where Enhancement Bonuses Apply:** In general, an enhancement bonus goes with a specific item a character uses, or with one of the user's abilities or other statistics. The example character's touch Armor Class is only 14, because a touch attack bypasses the character's armor bonus (including the +2 from the magic armor), natural armor bonus (including the +2 from the *barkskin* spell), and shield bonus. Those enhancement bonuses don't float around the character, warding off harm; they improve a specific aspect of the character's defenses.

**Overlapping Bonuses are Still in Place:** This can become significant when dealing with Armor Class. For example, our human has an Armor Class of 24 against an incorporeal touch attack, as follows:

- Base 10
- +2 Dexterity: The chainmail's Dexterity cap still applies, even though the chainmail itself can't block the attack.
- +4 shield bonus: The *shield* spell works against the attack because it is a force effect.
- +4 armor bonus: The *mage armor* spell works against the attack because it is a force effect. (But, neither the chainmail's +2 enhancement bonus nor the *barkskin*'s +2 enhancement bonus improve the *mage armor*'s armor bonus.)
- +2 deflection bonus from *shield of faith* spell.

## Coming in Part Three of Does It Stack?

Skip goes over the attack bonus, Reflex save, and jumping possibilities of the example character.

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## About the Author

**Skip Williams** keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and has been the Sage of ***Dragon Magazine*** since 1986. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (his borscht gets rave reviews).

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